

Volunteer Assists With Building and Repairing Monoliths

Submitted by: Carol Donzella, State Volunteer Coordinator, Connecticut

A soil monolith, or soil profile, is a slice of earth several feet deep that shows the different layers in soil. They are an excellent tool to learn about soils, their characteristics, and how to manage, use and protect soil resources. However, three decades of use in workshops and classrooms had taken its toll on the soil monoliths in the Connecticut state office, and finding the time to fix them seemed hard to come by. In addition, the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Trinity College and Yale University had all requested soil monoliths, each looking for representative monoliths for their areas to use for educational venues. The task of repairing and building them was put on a "to do," list as a potential activity for a volunteer.

Soil Scientists Shawn McVey and Debbie Surabian went looking for a volunteer to help them coordinate a workshop where they could repair and build the monoliths. They didn't have to wait long. Cara Porteus, a recent graduate of Bucknell University, had decided to take the advice of one of her business contacts and volunteer her skills to the NRCS while searching for just the right career. Cara's coursework and

Cara painting the soil monolith frames

experience in geology and English combined with her outstanding leadership and organizational skills made her the perfect candidate.

Cara lined up help to construct and paint the wood frames for the monoliths and assisted in collecting the soil samples. On the day of the workshop, she assisted the participants in making the monoliths.

In addition to repairing the monoliths and coordinating a successful soil monolith workshop, Cara also assisted with a ground penetrating radar onsite investigation for the NRCS engineers. She also helped edit soil posters for presentation at an upcoming conference. "Cara is an outstanding volunteer and a pleasure to work with," said Shawn. Both he and Debbie agree these projects wouldn't have been as successful without her.

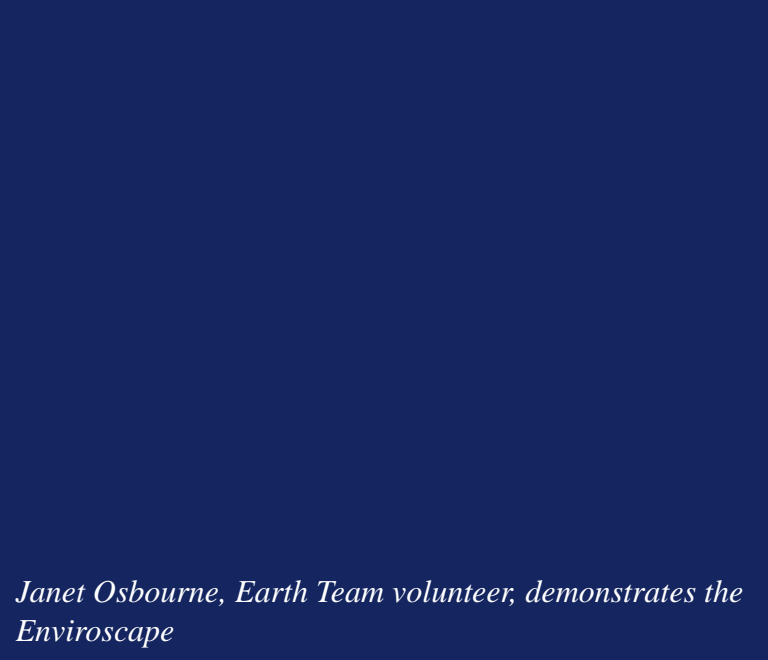
Ironically, Cara recently accepted a position from the same company that referred her to NRCS for volunteer work. "I learned so much, not only about NRCS as an agency, but about employment in the public sector in general," said Cara. "I certainly think my time at NRCS strengthened my ties to the company that hired me. Thank you for allowing me to help with the different projects and for taking the time to teach me about what you do,"

L-R: Cara building a soil monolith with State GIS Specialist Barbara Alexander

Mississippi Field Day

Submitted by: Christy Robinson, Area Volunteer Coordinator, Mississippi

The DeSoto and Tate County NRCS Field Offices and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Mississippi State Extension and the Army Corps of Engineers at Arkabutla, MS all joined together to host a 2-day Field Day Event for 778 fifth grade students. The Conservation Field Day/Public Lands Day featured demonstrations and activities on water safety, native animals, and pollution (air, water, land). The event included 27 exhibitors with over 300 volunteer hours from the Earth Team.



Janet Osbourne, Earth Team volunteer, demonstrates the Enviroscope




Erek Starnes and Jeff Harris deliver a presentation on Air Pollution

New York Earth Team Partners with Youth Workforce Development

Submitted by: Marci Posey, Area Volunteer Coordinator, New York

The Great Lakes Allegany Team in Western New York, recently recruited five youth from the Orleans County Workforce Development Youth Program as Earth Team volunteers. Over 900 volunteer hours were performed by these community minded youth. A few of the projects they worked on were willow harvesting, Wetland Reserve Program monitoring, and surveying. They also assisted with the Envirothon, outreach at county fairs, and most importantly, recruited new Earth Team volunteers.



Front L-R: John Hovanesian, Lake Plains RC&D Coordinator, Ashley Brooks and Miguel Chavez, Earth Team volunteers; Middle L-R: Cindy Lonnen and Cindy Troy, Employment and Training Specialists, Marci Posey, Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator; Back L-R: Charlie Kesterson, NRCS Soil Conservationist, Dan Schuth SWCD Manager

Beverly Ebright Volunteers for Forty Years and Counting

Submitted by: Sarah Szachnieski, State Volunteer Coordinator, Missouri

Beverly Ebright married Soil Conservationist Robert J. Brejcha, on November 10, 1969 thus starting her forty-year (and still counting) volunteer career. Volunteer? Is it allowed? With no Earth Team structure back then, there were lots of questions and concerns. But issues never fazed Area Conservationist Tom Dickens.

Being the daughter of a Rice County, Kansas conservation farmer, an English/Art major, and a landscape artist, she was a natural for the USDA Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service). Beverly considers conservation education activities "fun and rewarding." Photo, limerick, essay, and poster contests; newsletters, news articles, public service announcements, audio-visual presentations, student conservation classroom visits and field tours have all been part of her contributions. She even created a soil profile costume for her husband Robert to wear to the SWCD awards dinner and annual meeting.

With pretty penmanship and an "artist's eye," she is often recruited to complete paperwork on conservation practice forms.

If it is a nice day, she is no stranger to field work. Her husband calls her a "human level." As a rod-person, she is rarely off more than one or two tenths when surveying terraces. She explains that it's because she's lazy, "The fewer up and down moves, the better." Contractors appreciate her big, bold, clear figures on project benchmarks. Posting elevations on field benchmarks was her idea. This saves contractors time searching paperwork, and helps eliminate errors. Her proudest accomplishment was helping survey Clay County's largest terrace job - 7,575 feet. Not bad for an urbanizing county!

Beverly Ebright

She is always patient and goes the extra mile in her efforts to find answers for every customer's question. Researching questions on the internet is her forte. When she cannot find an answer, she finds contact information for a person, agency, or business that should be able to answer the client's question. Beverly enjoys assisting walk-in clients with their requests for aerial photos, flood plain maps, soil surveys, and plat maps. She gives them service with a smile, and when they ask how much copies will cost them, she delights in telling them, "No charge."

Her husband, Robert, retired in December 2005, and immediately went to work as part time District technician. Beverly always accompanies him to the office...there is always something for a volunteer to do. No question about it.

2010 is the 25th Anniversary of the Earth Team. Volunteers have been an important part in helping NRCS carry out their mission. Please watch for more information throughout the year on ways NRCS offices will be sharing the successes of our volunteers and employees in celebration of this anniversary!

Celebrating 25 years!

Volunteers Work To Develop Blight Resistant Chinquapin Trees

Submitted by: Pat Hoeffken, State Volunteer Coordinator, Arkansas

The Marshall FFA Chapter won the 2009 Arkansas Earth Team Group Volunteer Award. Neal Mays, Earth Team volunteer, FFA Advisor and Vocational Agriculture Instructor at Marshall High School lead the FFA chapter in planting Ozark Chinquapin nuts for tree production around the Marshall community.

Ask the average teenager what a Chinquapin is, and the likely answer is “A what?,” The Ozark Chinquapin, once a dominant tree in North Arkansas forests, now usually grows to be no larger than a shrub before it dies of the Chinese Chestnut Blight. “The National Park Service, NRCS and Earth Team volunteers in the Marshall FFA Chapter are working toward restoring this tree to its original standing in our forests,” said Mays.

The Chinese Chestnut Blight was imported to the United States in Chinese Chestnut trees in the early part of the last century. It quickly spread throughout the Eastern United States, wiping out the American Chestnut of the Appalachian Mountains and eventually reached the Ozarks in the 1940’s. By the end of the 1950’s, few Chinquapin trees were left that were large enough to bear nuts.



Marshall FFA Chapter holding the Arkansas Earth Team Group Volunteer Award

Chinquapins are high in protein and energy, and are a favorite food source for many wildlife species. In fact, while Arkansas was being settled there were numerous accounts of families surviving by eating Chinquapins. They were ground into flour, used for puddings and were also commonly fed to livestock. They were so plentiful, people sometimes gathered them in wagon loads. It is also said that the Chinquapin tree was used from cradle to grave as a baby crib and coffin. The wood is high in tannins which creates a natural resistance to rotting. This feature makes the Chinquapin wood great for fence posts and lumber which make direct contact with soil and moisture. Due to its rot resistance, it is very common to find the remains of Chinquapin trees which died 50 or more years ago in Ozark Mountain forests.

Because of these great attributes, Mark DePoy, Chief of Resource Management with the Buffalo National River, became interested in restoring these trees in Ozark forests. He contacted Brent Clark, NRCS District Conservationist in Marshall, and Neal Mays. The three departments then went to work propagating Chinquapin trees in the high school greenhouse. DePoy obtained nuts from trees large enough to bear fruit before they died of the blight. These trees were located in Searcy and Carroll Counties, and from a tree located in Texas.

“The goal of the project is to sprout these nuts and allow the seedlings to grow for a couple of years. They will then be infected with the blight, and if there are survivors, these could become seed stock for a breeding program of blight-resistant Ozark Chinquapins. Perhaps once again these trees will be a major component of the Ozarks forest ecosystem,” said Mays.

Teachers Receive Pennsylvania NRCS 2009 Group Volunteer Award

Submitted by: Susan Burky, State Volunteer Coordinator, Pennsylvania

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Pennsylvania recently awarded teachers from Conneaut Lake, Cochranton and Cambridge Springs High Schools the Fiscal Year 2009 Volunteer Program Group Award for the efforts they put forth in restoring a riparian area along two small un-named tributaries to French Creek. The teachers, Megan Spellman of Conneaut Lake, Simoan Ray of Cochranton, and Justin Grubbs of Cambridge Springs, were the group leaders on the project site and accepted their award from NRCS for their outstanding efforts.

On two separate days, a total of 90 students from all three schools planted 450 softwoods, 476 hardwoods, 1300 live stakes, and installed 476 tree shelters on the William Dunn property located in Fairfield Township, Crawford County. These three separate schools had to work together as one team toward a common goal of restoring these sections of streams back to a more natural state and improving water quality, reducing erosion, and creating a more diverse habitat for wildlife.

Justin Grubbs

Simoan Ray-Cochranton

Megan Spellman

Volunteer Assists the National Earth Team/LANDCARE Staff

Rasmin Keco recently completed 4 weeks of volunteer time at the National Earth Team/LANDCARE Office. Rasmin stated, "I enjoyed working at the office very much and it was a great experience. Everyone was very friendly and it was fun being able to help."

His duties included, working on packets, checking publication files against the database titles and most of all he enjoyed working in the warehouse and learning how publications are shipped.

Rasmin Keco

Ad Placed on *Craig's List* Recruits an Invaluable Volunteer

Submitted by: Jill Clothier, State Volunteer Coordinator, Iowa

Ana-Maria Grittmann donates many hours at the Iowa State Office. Some of her duties include filling envelopes, making copies, organizing brochure closets, creating inventories and spreadsheets, collating, mass mailings, and wading out into streams sampling.

Ana-Maria joined the Earth Team after seeing an ad for volunteers on Craig's List. She has put in hours both in the office and out in the field and is now researching a change in career fields. Conservation is a passion of hers and has led Ana-Maria into seeking career opportunities in wildlife management or conservation fields. The varied and extensive experience she has accumulated over the years gives her a unique perspective and skill set.

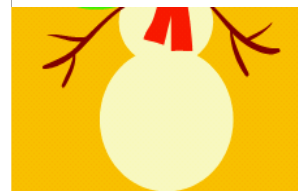
Moving to the United States in 2002 from Romania was a huge change for Ana-Maria. She is a Veterinarian with a PhD in Veterinary Sciences and has worked at Iowa State University and the University of Iowa for several years in the Biological Sciences Department, researching molecular cell biology. Ana-Maria met her husband, Mark in 2002 and they now reside in Ankeny, Iowa. She is a pottery maker and a Master Gardener Intern.

When asked about her interest in conservation and gardening, Ana-Maria replied, "It is so wonderful to plant and grow your own food. You can get the varieties you like, peppers, herbs, tomatoes. You have something unique and you care for them like they are your own babies.,, Through her Master Gardener class, she is learning about prairie plants and grasses and why they are useful for the environment – to name a few, they attract wildlife, absorb rainwater and they make beautiful landscaping.

Volunteering with the Earth Team is a win-win situation for volunteers and for NRCS. It took 5 minutes to post a free ad on Craig's List and from those 5 minutes, we have an invaluable volunteer who is now exploring a career in conservation. "Helping People Help the Land,, is not only the mission of NRCS, it is also the embodiment of the Earth Team.

L-R: Ana-Maria Grittmann and Jeremy Tipton stream sampling

*Happy Holidays from the National
Earth Team/LANDCARE Office*



Don't Forget: Venessa is looking for articles for the next issue of the

VolunteerVoice! Please limit articles to a maximum of 3/4 of a page and send jpg photos as a
